

# Read to Me

A newsletter for families and others who care about the future of young people.

Volume 1, Issue 3

Summer 2007



## The Importance of Grandparents



### Special Points of Interest in this newsletter:

- The Important of Grandparents
- Long Distance Grandparenting
- Family History Projects
- A Grandparent's Role
- Bonding with Grandchildren over Books



*This issue of "Read to Me" includes information about the importance of Grandparents in a child's life. There are some tips about long distance grandparenting, the role of grandparents, and family history projects. Please feel free to share this issue with your children's grandparents.*

### Long Distance Grandparenting

Most grandparents welcome grandchildren as one of life's great gifts. It can be a hardship when they are not close by. Even though thousands of miles away, it is possible for grandparents to still be involved!

It takes a bit of creativity to connect your children with their grandparents. A little bit of planning can capture the children's attention about the people in their life who may be faraway.

*Pictures:* Send pictures of the grandchildren frequently. Take photos of some of the every day type activities – not just formal, posed photos. Digital cameras make it easy to send photos by e-mail.

*Telephone:* Toddlers love telephones. They love to hear voices on the other end of the line. Have a photo of the grandparents available to show the child as they talk to them on the phone so they can make the connection. Continue the calls as the child grows.

*E-mail:* Children are fascinated with computers and love e-mail. How about sending some fun and animated e-cards occasionally and encourage grandparents to reciprocate.

*Cards and letters:* Have the child draw pictures or 'write' a letter to send to the

grandparents. Encourage the grandparents to send occasional cards and letters. Getting their own mail is a thrill for children.

*Visits and vacations:* Most important is getting together as often as possible. Make certain the timing of visits suits all involved. Be patient if the young grandchildren cling to mom or dad. That will probably happen! Use toys and books to help transition into a face-to-face relationship.

Nurture the grandparent – grandchild relationships. The reward will be joy and delight!



Gary reading to Mikayla

## Imagination Library

**Please keep your address current with United Way of Southwest Minnesota.**



**Imagination Library books** are mailed out at bulk library rates and **can not be forwarded** by the post office. Call us (507-929-2273) or e-mail us (unitedway@unitedwayswmn.org) right away if your address changes. Even though our office changes the database immediately upon notification, it takes 6-8 weeks for address changes to go into effect at the publisher.

Contributors and underwriters of the program are always welcome and that support is greatly appreciated at any time. Contributions can be sent to United Way of Southwest MN, P.O. Box 41, Marshall, MN 56258.



United Way of Southwest Minnesota

**NEW: Register for Imagination Library online at [www.unitedwayswmn.org!!](http://www.unitedwayswmn.org!!)  
Check out the Parent Tool Kit on our web page**

# Family History Projects...



## ....for Grandparents and Grandchildren

The following projects are perfect starting points for passing on history and having fun with your grandchildren. In fact, the AARP suggests getting the grandchildren to help “so they can learn, and start to connect the past and present.”

**Picture perfect** - Help grandchildren identify with the family history by gathering and preserving photos and old records. Ask relatives for originals they might have that you can copy. Learn who is in the picture and any interesting stories about them. Arrange all your collected memorabilia in a scrapbook. Write down the details of the picture and how it connects to other information you have about your family, such as diaries, letters and interviews.

**Home truths** - Take the children to visit homes and towns where previous generations have lived. A home is evidence of your history, as well as an expression of the people who lived in them. They also reveal trends in architecture and construction. Fixtures and landscaping are tied up with tastes and technologies. Also, a home might offer clues about births, jobs and the local economy.



**Talk about it** - Pass on stories of your family’s past by emphasizing funny adventures highlighting similarities or differences to your child’s experience. Gather these stories by interviewing your relatives and writing down their answers, or recording them on tape. Conduct the interviews with care, and you’ll end up with a coherent oral history rather than random reminiscences. The tapes will also preserve something fragile and precious - your narrators’ voices, how they express themselves, and a sense of who they are.

**Road trip** - Take your family on a vacation to sites that are significant in your family history. This will bring them to life for the children.

**Hand me downs** - Keep a journal and write what you think and feel, see, read and hear - about weddings, jobs, scandals, news, politics and parades. Relax. Start small. Keep it fun. Years from now you will have a document that will fascinate your descendants.



**Family video** - Use the following interview questions to capture your family story on tape.

1. **Describe where your family lived.** What did you like best about it? How did it look? What color was your room? With whom did you share it?
2. **Discuss ethnic heritage and customs.** Talk about religion - discuss what traditions and practices are most important to you.
3. **Describe past historical events** - wars, past presidents, etc.
4. **Where did you go to school?** Take a trip to the building, if possible. Talk about best friends and teachers, favorite classes, sports played and other activities and highlights of these years.
5. **Did you go to college, serve in the military or go to technical school?** What did you study? What were the highlights of these years?
6. **Share pictures from your childhood.** Describe or visit old houses and neighborhoods. Talk about neighbors and places you used to visit.
7. **What kinds of friends have you had in your life?** Discuss what qualities made these people special. Arrange to meet them if possible.
8. **Tell the tale of your relationship with your spouse.** Where did you meet? When did you get married? Where? What was the wedding like? Why do you love your partner?
9. **Talk about work** - the jobs you’ve had over the years. Talk about the challenges you have faced, the rewards you’ve received. If possible, visit a place of current or past employment.
10. **Pass on life lessons.** Share hopes, philosophies, disappointments and advice.

# bits of understanding



## A Booklist for Reading With Dad

### Old Hat...New Hat

#### For Younger Children

#### Defining a Grandparent's Role in a Grandchild's Life



If you are becoming a grandparent, you are probably walking around in a well-worn hat. You know who you are, and so does your family. But when your child has a child, you will have a new hat to wear. What kind of grandparent will you be?

Playmate....teacher...nurturer...confidant...babysitter? With so many styles to consider, you'd better shop around. Try on different roles. Mix and match until you find the grandparenting hat - or hats - that fit you.

Too flat...too frilly...too scratchy...too silly. To find a role that is comfortable, consider:

Your adult children's expectations. Have you talked with your children about your role in your grandchild's life?

Your lifestyle. How much time do you have to devote to your grandchild?



Your grandparenting goals. Are there family history, culture or traditions you want to teach your grandchild?

Your interests. What kinds of activities would you like to do with your grandchild?

Your well-being. How much energy, patience and desire do you have to participate in your grandchild's daily life?

Make sure your chosen hat (or hats) respects your adult children's needs and supports their styles of parenting. If so - if the hat you chose suits your children, too - you know you've found a hat that is just right.

For additional information, visit the following web pages:



<http://www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/>

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/consumer/10239.html>

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/ss-fact/0181.html>

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1405.pdf>

<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/html/ec/ec1459/>

**Baby Dance** (1999) by *Ann Taylor* A board book in which an African-American father croons to his baby daughter and dances while holding her.

**Daddies Are For Catching Fireflies** (1999) by *Harriet Ziefert* A lift-the-flap book that shows all the special things daddies can do.

**Just Like Daddy** (1981) by *Frank Asch* A young bear describes all the activities he does during the day that are just like his daddy's.

**My Dad** (1991) by *Debbie Bailey* A board book with photos of a variety of dads and children in everyday settings.

**Night Shift Daddy** (2000) by *Eileen Spinelli* A father who works the night shift has a special bond with his daughter.

**Vroomaloom Zoom** (2000) by *John Coy* A father takes his daughter on an imaginary car ride, lulling her to sleep with various sounds.

**What Dads Can't Do** (2000) by *Douglas Wood* A humorous account of how dads show love by explaining all the things they can not do.



#### For Older Children

**Carlos and the Cornfield** (1995) by *Jan Romero Stevens* In this English/Spanish bilingual story, a boy learns the meaning of his father's statements, "You reap what you sow."

**Dad and Me in the Morning** (1996) by *Patricia Lakin* A young deaf boy spends a glorious morning sharing the beauty of a sunrise with his father.

**How Many Stars in the Sky?** (1991) by *Lenny Hort* When a father and son can't sleep, they take a long drive to the country to count the stars.

**Just the Two of Us** (2001) by *Will Smith* A popular song adds to the story of a father's love as his child grows from a boy into a man.

**My Father's Boat** (1998) by *Sherry Garland* A Vietnamese immigrant tells his son how he learned to fish from his father.

**Owl Moon** (1987) by *Jane Yolen* On a winter's night under a full moon, a father and daughter trek into the woods to go owling.

**Sammy Wakes His Dad** (2002) By *Chip Emmons* A father, who uses a wheelchair, is reluctant to go fishing with his son until his son's love finally moves him to action.

Taken from "A Booklist for Reading With Dad" developed by the Minnesota Humanities Commission - for more information go to [www.minnesotahumanities.org](http://www.minnesotahumanities.org)



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This is a special newsletter for families who are enrolled in Imagination Library.



## Bonding with Grandchildren over Books



Reading books to your grandchildren is the best way to nurture young readers. But there are lots of other things you can do to get kids reading:

- Turn off the television so there's more time for reading. Then set aside a regular time each day for reading. This could be 20 minutes before bedtime, or right after dinner.
- Have plenty of reading material around the house, and not just books. Reading is Fundamental (RIF), a national literacy group, says kids should also read magazines, newspapers, comic books, cookbooks, food labels, catalogues, and even DVD labels.

- Take a book with you whenever you leave the house, advises the Family Reading Partnership. That way, you can read to your grandchild while you're waiting at the doctor's office, in the grocery store, or at a restaurant. Bring books-on-tape along in the car to keep a child entertained.
- Be a role model. Let the children see you reading. Talk to them about the interesting things you've read.
- Visit the library. Nearly all libraries have special times for different age groups.



**Andrew and Grandpa reading**

- Check with local bookstores for ideas for gifts. Local booksellers like [Bound To Read](#) in Marshall have extensive knowledge about interesting and new books that will become a favorite of the child in your life.

*United Way of Southwest Minnesota is an independent, local organization working to create lasting changes in people's lives and the communities in Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Yellow Medicine and western Redwood Counties of Minnesota.*

Learn more about United Way of Southwest Minnesota at [www.unitedwayswmn.org](http://www.unitedwayswmn.org)  
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